

Those Troublesome Mosquitoes

Read the passage.

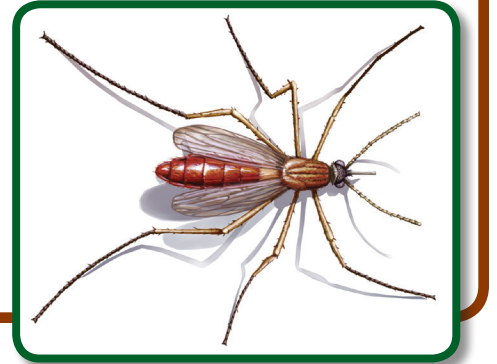
There are more than 3,000 kinds of mosquitoes living in the world. They're found everywhere. Some even live in the Arctic. Wherever they are found, mosquitoes feed on liquids and the blood of animals or people. That humming sound? That's the beating of their two wings. A female mosquito's wings make a higher-pitched buzz than a male mosquito's wings.

Female mosquitoes are also the ones that bite. Males do not. Why do mosquitoes bite? It is to feed the eggs they are holding inside their bodies. The mosquito's *proboscis* actually has six parts that it uses to penetrate skin and suck up blood. Sometimes it drinks as much as its own body weight. When it is finished, it flies away.

What's so bad about that? Even a tiny mosquito bite is painful. A mosquito's saliva causes an allergic reaction in people. You can see it when a *welt* forms on a person's skin. The welt is an itchy, red bump. A mosquito bite may not seem so bad, but the germs and parasites in a mosquito's saliva can be deadly.

Some mosquitoes transmit such diseases as *malaria*, *encephalitis*, *West Nile virus*, *yellow fever*, *dengue*, and more. Many of these diseases are transmitted from birds to humans when mosquitoes feed on an infected bird and then bite a person.

Scientists around the world try to eradicate or reduce mosquitoes and mosquito-borne diseases. One thing anyone can do is eliminate the stagnant water where mosquitoes lay their eggs. This might include filling holes in trees, discarding old tires and other garbage, and emptying lawn ornaments that collect water. Thousands of scientists around the world are researching ways to control mosquitoes and reduce the diseases they carry.



Answer the questions.

- Why do you think it is only female mosquitoes that bite animals and humans? _____

- How do mosquitoes transmit diseases to humans?
 - through their breath (sneezing and coughing)
 - through their saliva
 - through their unwashed feet and wings
 - all of the above
- Which of the following is a place where a mosquito would not lay its eggs?
 - birdbath
 - swamp
 - old car tire
 - desert sand dune
- Is a welt the worst thing that can happen to a human who is bitten by a mosquito? Why or why not? _____

- True or false? The mosquito's humming sound is made by air passing over the insect's tightly closed lips.

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Answer Key

1. Answers will vary but may include the fact that a female mosquito drinks liquids and blood to nourish the eggs she is carrying in her body.
2. b
3. d
4. No, the welt is not the worst thing. A mosquito bite could transmit a deadly disease.
5. False